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ABSTRACT

The emotional and paraconscious characteristics of an adult who is faced with the need to learn to read make the use of the suggestopedic instructional method, which operates below the level of consciousness, attractive. Among learner characteristics to which suggestopedia can be directly applied are integrative and instrumental motivation, and those aspects of cultural conditioning that will not allow the learner to accept an imposed written language, which must grow from his/her own verbal command. The complex anxieties of the adult learner can be answered by the total relaxation and security that is the essence of suggestopedia. The inclusion of artistic elements in instruction, especially music, is crucial. Because an ideal mood for learning is established from the beginning, remarkable results can be achieved in a short time. A global approach toward teaching children to read and write is described. With some modifications, a similar program could be instituted for adults. (JB)

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SUGGESTOPAEDIA AND LITERACY

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Can suggestology or suggestopaedia make a contribution in the field of literacy? Although no connection has ever been established[1], the possibility of applying this new pedagogical approach to the solution of this crucial problem deserves to be considered. The stakes are considerable and require our attention.

A Science of Relations: Suggestology

Suggestology, or the science of suggestion, studies the relations between an individual and his environment. It has in fact been established that anyone, wherever he is and whatener he does, receives a considerable number messages from his environment. For the most part, these messages are at the paraconscious level but this not mean that they have no effect on the individual. As G. Lozanov says: "Our theory is based on this: we subconsciously receive signals from all over the world which are suggestive, not rational or conscious. What is suggestive is that which is not conscious and rational..."[2]

One of the most interesting contributions of suggestology is the analysis of the subconscious influence of our surroundings. We receive a number of suggestions of all types from our surroundings; these unconsciously affect our attitudes (unfortunately often in a negative or restrictive way) and thereby also affect our behaviour.

The study of this whole area of suggestology interested Dr. Lozanov early in his career as a psychotherapist. In trying to explain why he was successful in treating his patients, Dr. Lozanov concluded that

this was attributable to certain factors that were present in each case: "The results... confirm our concept of a therapeutic mechanism common to most psychotherapeutic methods."[3]

Dr. Lozanov called these factors "suggestive factors" because, although they undoubtedly influence treatments, they are paraconscious and emotional (in the broad sense of the term).

The manner in which these paraconscious influences are perceived and the effect they have on the individual are obviously very complex. However, research in this area has shown that in any psychological or relational or communicative activity, there is always both a conscious and an unconscious dimension, and that stimuli received have an effect which can be decisive on attendant or subsequent activities. "At all times and in all facets of communication we communicate with one another not only logically and consciously but also subconsciously and emotionally."[4]

Dr. Lozanov transition from psychotherapy to teaching is easily explained in this context since there is a great similarity between the doctor/patient and teacher/learner relationship. "After working for about fifteen to twenty years as a psychotherapist I think there are some factors in this psychotherapeutical communication which get good results. I've come to the conclusion that the same results are possible in pedagogical processes."[5] There are also many similarities between the objectives of the two "treatments", since in both cases the idea is to effect improvement. A fundamental humanistic concern underlies Dr. Lozanov's approach which explains also why he branched out from psychotherapy into pedagogy, without excluding other potential areas.

However, he believed that many benefits could be drawn from his research and its applications in the field of education.

A New Approach to Education: Suggestopaedia

By applying the results of his research to his work in teaching, G. Lozanov actually created " a new science of education",[6] or a new approach to teaching which he called suggestopaedia.

The purpose of suggestopaedia is very clear: using the fundamentals of suggestology, and on the basis of the many experiments, to devise a learning system that makes practical use of the principles of suggestology and pedagogy, in other words a system that changes the learner's attitude toward learning by making it positive. The idea is to create a concrete desuggestion/suggestion dialectic. The objective of such a dialectical process is to free the individual from negative suggestions which limit his development and to stimulate his potential, develop his creativity and personality and at the same time, make it easier for him to assimilate new concepts.

It obvious, therefore, that suggestopaedia is not first and foremost a teaching method, but much more an educational philosophy or dynamics, or an approach which is above all essentially an overall approach. The suggestopaedic system focuses on the whole person and is designed to develop all his potential abilities.

Hence suggestopaedia takes into account the learner's conscious/unconscious duality, uses every possible channel and co-ordinates the responses toward a single goal: a positive desuggestive/suggestive process. Thus it can be said that the key to suggestopaedia is the recognition that there is a conscious and an unconscious level in every

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relational situation. Suggestopaedia has the greatest possible respect for the learner; as far as possible, it eliminates everything that could interfere with or restrict his development, even at the unconscious level. This seems to be in keeping with the values put forward in many circles concerning a new educational order: "To ensure change necessary for social progress, education must stimulate the individual's creative faculties, encourage his development and with it, the development of society. The individual's personal and social development of the community constitute the objective and set the standard by which we measure the success of systems and activities in that field." [7]

To go beyond the mere assimilation of a subject, we must reexamine the learning situation, and organize or order its various components on the basis of our objectives. We have to establish a practical model in which all the features are part of a desuggestion/suggestion dialectic, which respects the conscious/unconscious levels of the learner and creates a positive approach to him. To do this, several relationships which suggestive implications are taken into account, particularly the teacher/learner, learning/learner and attitude/behaviour relationships, in other words, almost the entire double-level concept. Of course the didactical system is organized, adapted and structured on the basis of the learners, subjects and objectives.[8]

The students must have confidence in their ability to master the containt of the course. Therefore the process of instruction is always conducted in an atmosphere of psychological relaxation and involves a pleasant and calm immersion of the student in the subject being studied.

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This is in accordance with the principle of joy and the absence of tension, which requires joyous freedom in the study process. Emotional release creates conditions for the peacefull creative intellectual activity without the presence of extenuating and exhausting tension.

The suggestopaedic process of instruction includes also elements of emotional value such as music, songs, mimes, visual arts. The arts create a specific environment of an emotional nature which stimulates individual capacities and increases receptiveness. These elements are integrated into the program itself and are used directly or peripherally (posters for example). "A series of experiments has proved that a considerable proportion of peripheral perceptions are grasped without loss of energy and these broaden the dimensions of the program which is acquired and stored in the long-term memory." [9]

"The results of suggestopaedic teaching have been startling, and almost every study has shown that students who learned by Suggestopaedia have demonstrated significant improvement; in many cases, performing better in less time than students who have been taught by conventional methods." [10]

Suggestopaedia and Literacy

General Principles

Does the success achieved in teaching languages with the suggestopaedic method justify the application of these principles to learning the written language? We feel that it does, because the principles on which suggestopaedia is based are universal and apply to all

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mankind. The results obtained in countries as widely separated and as disparate as Bulgaria and Canada, France and Hungary, the United States and Austria, to name only a few, have amply demonstrated this point. In particular, the results obtained in teaching young children to read in Bulgaria and Austria are an encouraging and promising sign. Finally, we should not forget that teaching an illiterate adult to read and write is similar in many respects to teaching a second language. It is a question of learning a new code[11] whose points of contact with the spoken code are far from obvious. Although the contents of the spoken and literary languages are identical, their significans are completely different: they consist of vocal elements on the one hand and graphic elements on the other. "In the first place, writing "duplicates spoken language by presenting to the eye what the latter presents to the ear".[12] Writing seems to be simply a transposition of linguistic expression to a graphic mode of expression: " 'Writing is a painting of the voice; the more it resembles the voice, the better it is" (Voltaire) ... This theoretical prejudice does not in any way correspond to reality."[13]

Why are the means of learning one code (oral) not suitable for learning the other (written)? In both cases a set of signs must be memorized and the mechanisms for decoding and then reproducing them must be acquired. The high degree of receptivity created by the specific psychology which underlies learning by suggestion can only encourage the assimilation and integration of new information.

The psychological conditions which prevail when a person learns a second language are, mutatis mutandis, more or less the same:

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"We know that in general, any person who must learn a completely new language is in a particular psychological state of fear and apprehension before the unknown because of the difficulties of the new language or the uncertainty about his own ability to learn a foreign language. This more or less conscious psychological state can range from a certain inner tension to extreme anguish which unquestionably produces a psychological block that is bound to have repercussions on learning. The teacher's behaviour toward his student can reinforce this depressive or negative state... Sometimes it is also necessary to take into account the negative influences imanating from society in general. Other negative influences may spring from the student's immediate surroundings - family, friends or previous experience. Positive influences such as interest or motivation for any number of reasons should not be discounted without proper consideration. However, the positive influences may be counterbalanced by the negative influences I have just mentioned."[14]

Motivation to learn the written language and interest in so doing are clearly of major importance. This problem, which was long neglected, was the subject of a symposium at Mohonk Mountain House; a summary of the proceedings has appeared entitled "A Reason to Read".[15] It would certainly be possible, and indeed worthwhile, to add to it the results of research on motivation for learning a second language: "While intelligence provides the medium for learning, motivation including intrinsic motivation, provides the will, the required aroused state, and the attention to the task that makes learning possible."[16]

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In this discussion of motivational variables in second language learning, R.C. Gardner states that motivation refers to those nonintellectual characteristics which orient the student to try to acquire elements of the second language.[17] Successful second language acquisition depends upon the student's willingness or desire to be like valued members of the other language community. This is referred to by Gardner and Lambert as the integrative motive.[18] If the student is influenced by the integrative motive, he will adopt various features of the behaviour which characterize the other linguistic community.

A second type of motivation, discussed by Gardner and Lambert, emphasizes the utilitarian value of the language. This is referred to as the instrumental motive and would not necessarily involve active communication with or liking for the linguistic community whose language is being studied.

Can it not be said that the transition from the spoken to the written language involves identical motivation? Is it not true that reading and writing are characteristic activities of a separate linguistic community? The importance of this point has frequently been stressed in the case of the utility of the written language, at least as the illiterate perceives it (to take utility in a very broad sense).

As we have previously pointed out, [19] the suggestopaedic method of teaching takes these two problems of attitude and motivation very much into account and makes a highly positive contribution to their solution. A suggestopaedic model for learning to write would thus make a major contribution to this important sector of education.

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The general characteristics of a suggestopaedic program for teaching reading, if it is to be effective, must take into account the principles which were briefly mentioned above. Any paraconscious stimuli capable of fostering and accelerating the learning process must be included in the program; this presupposes a good knowledge of the students' social background, not only so that any action which might unconsciously block or delay assimilation of the written language may be avoided, but also so that use may be made of the lines of force which may similarly promote the process of learning to read. In her interesting article "Towards readable writing", which appeared in the same journal,[20] Julia van Dyken provides some fascinating examples to illustrate this point. "Jibu words cannot be tied together using English grammar. If this is done, the Jibu will listen politely, but not comprehend." (p 17) It is easy to see the unconscious effect this will have on him beyond his listening politely to an unintelligible document. "Therefore, the content of the literature must originate in the mind of the writer who speaks the same language as his readers and understands their customs and culture." (p 20) The subject matter of texts used to teach reading may unconsciously have a fundamental effect and either increase the learner's interest or discourage him and ultimately destroy his motivation. The choice of subject matter is thus of critical importance from the very beginning of the learning process. As we have shown elsewhere,[21] the learner must feel involved from the outset in what he is learning, and what he is learning must be expressed in terms with which he is familiar. "Have you ever picked up a technical article on a subject with which you are not familiar? How quickly could you understand it? Contrast this difficulty

with the ease with which you can read a novel written in terms of life as you know it, or even a technical paper on the subject in your own personal life which you are interested in."[22] In this situation we are not in the sphere of rationality and logic but rather in that of the emotions, of the irrational, of suggestion - the sphere which serves as a basis for suggestology and which suggestopaedia takes very much into account. This is in itself perhaps not new, but there are many methods of language learning or of learning to read which do not take this factor into account at all and whose subject matter evokes a lack of interest and despair. "Literacy training must meet the vital needs" said Amadou Mathar M'Bow, Director General of Unesco, in his message on Literacy Day 1977.

At this point we should make a connection between learning and attitudes toward learning and fundamental human needs, as expressed, for example, by Maslow.[23] The process of learning the written language must not only take place in a context of security but also fulfil the need to be included in the social framework, the need to associate with other members of the community. If the process runs counter to this need and creates a feeling of insecurity, it merely sets off a mechanism, albeit unconscious, of rejection and refusal. This will underline once again the need for a subject matter which has its cultural roots in the society of the learner, knowledge of which will reinforce the feeling of belonging to an emotionally meaningful social group.

The teacher is a key element in this process. Suggestology has shown the importance of the unconscious relationship between the learner and the teacher,[24] and in the teaching field suggestopaedia has confirmed

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the results of this research. It is important for example, that the teacher belong to the same cultural group as the learners and that he present a model of behaviour which is meaningful to his students. This is related to the problem of prestige or credibility which encourages learning and integration into the "other" linguistic community. Thus it is necessary at the same time to fulfil the need for social integration on the Maslowian scale and the motivation to become integrated. The confidence that is thus created in the learner is conducive to the rapid assimilation of new data and this helps increase his feeling of the teacher's "competence" and so on.

Another key factor which should be borne in mind is the inclusion of artistic elements in the learning process. This factor too is only rarely considered, although it is fundamental in creating an atmosphere which is emotionally relaxing: music, song, dance and drawing can easily be included in the course, as they already are in language courses: "Mime, singing, dramatic expression, artistic reading and rhythm are all included in the suggestopaedic learning process, as are concert recitals which are perhaps the best known artistic component of Lozanovian suggestopaedia.

We must appreciate the context in which music is used in suggestopaedia to understand its role in the teaching system. This element from the world of the arts combines with psychology and teaching to form a global pedagogicla system, a "gestalt pedagogy"[25] geared to the whole personality of the student."[26] "The artistic tools used in suggestopaedia introduce a new type of liberating and stimulating didactic

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art (music, literature, theatre arts and so on) into the learning process. They are not an illustration in the learning process but are integrated into the program".[27] In the practical description which follows, we can see how artistic components of this kind may be included in learning the written language and how they may help speed up the process.

The structure of the teaching material should thus include the suggestological teaching method we have in mind. A great deal can be achieved in a short time:[28] "The importance of this pedagogic approach lies in the unconscious stimuli which act upon the student without his being aware of them. He finds that his inner tensions very quickly disappear, since after only very brief contact with the language, he can already speak and communicate with his neighbours. In other words he is placed in the state of psychological relaxation necessary for successful learning from the very beginning of the course"[29] The same applies to the written language - the faster the learner masters the written language, the more his interest will grow and the faster he will progress. Particular attention should be paid to the presentation of the written elements in order that these may be understood as soon as possible. "The didactic means call for generalization of the meanings of the codes and the enlarging of the methodic units. The enlarged methodic unit makes it possible to get an overall view of all the material studied, while the generalization of the codes makes it possible..."[30]

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Practical application

We began by stressing a number of psychological factors which must be considered in developing a suggestopeadic course. As we have already pointed out on many occasions, on the one hand, "one can see that a suggestopaedic educational system offers innumerable possibilities. It can be used in any discipline, and with students of all ages provided the appropriate adaptation is made to the student group, subject group or subject matter"[31]; on the other hand, however, "suggestopaedia represents a genuine philosophy of teaching. It is not a recipe book or a collection of gimmicks."[32]

This spirit is characteristic of the model used to teach children which we shall now attempt to describe briefly. We feel that this model could be used for adults if a few modifications were made on the basis of what was said above.

There are several stages in the process of learning to read: On the first day of class posters consisting of coloured drawings and the corresponding words are hung on the classroom walls. The first letter of the word appearing on the corresponding poster is artistically incorporated into the drawings. The children's attention is not drawn to these posters, whose only function seems to be décorative.

Two days later the posters are removed from the walls and randomly shown to the children. The children are asked to find the work corresponding to each drawing and this provides a learning activity that is at once amusing and productive.

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The second group of posters prepared prior to the class is then hung on the walls and used in the same way as the first group. In this way the children will perceive all the letter of the alphabet peripherally.

Later the children are given booklets containing all the drawings and all the words they encountered on the posters, in random order. They must match each word with the appropriate picture. The children are then given additional booklets containing only outline drawings and words. The learning activity consists of colouring these drawings.

All the words appearing on the posters are shown separately by means of a specially prepared slide projection system and the whole class or individual children are asked to read them quickly. The words are then arranged in short sentences, each of which contains a new word. The children read these and only global reading is allowed, that is, the words and sentences must be read as a whole and not broken down into syllables. A set of games is used to increase reading speed.

More elaborate artistic activities then come into play. The students attend a teaching presentation which is designed to awaken their interest and curiosity and to encourage them to participate. Here too, the young pupils discover how to solve a puzzle gradually by learning to read new words.

In addition, poems learned by heart beforehand are read either by the group or individually. While reading, the students do not stop at the new words. They work along at the same speed and concentrate on the meaning.

This first stage should take up about ten days of class. Then the children are given new sentences to read, all of which are designed tc create pleasant feelings in the child and contain more new words. The instructor should endeavour to alternate fast group reading sessions with individual reading sessions and games.

The children are then given booklets containing short, pleasant, rhythmical texts which are read a number of times with the speed increasing each time. The aim is to increase the children's reading speed while avoiding a situation where they break down the word into its syllables. During this stage we avoid reading a text more than twice so that it will not be learned by rote.

Regular books may be distributed to the children at this point. The instructor should introduce a large number of these and ensure that the children read a large variety of texts. Here too, it is important to avoid repetition.

A golbal approach is also used in teaching the children to write.

The instructor writes a short, meaningful and affective sentence on the board. He then briefly analyses the content and structure of the sentence by explaining each of the words, letters, and capital letters.

The students write the entire sentence in their books. The instructor checks the work of each student and has them write out any corrections, but only once. He then dictates the same words in a different sentence.

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Gradually the students write increasingly complex sentences. To prevent the lesson from becoming boring, the teachers should select texts for copying that are interesting and play music as often as possible while the students are copying the sentences.

Obviously, it is easy to use a scheme of this kind in teaching adults to read and write. We should stress at this point, however, that although this approach may be similar to the global method, it differs from it in many respects. "The global learning process is clearly effective only if the conditions of life are secure".[33] Under the circumstances described above, this principle, which is frequently neglected in so-called global systems, is applied in full. The emotional dimension, so often lacking in teaching methods, is fully included as in life. As a result, there exists not only a wide range of material on the emotional level, but also various artistic elements which continually accompany the learning process itself, ie., music, posters, reading aloud, poetry, drawings and other art forms, on which to draw. This is the image of a life which, according to Teilhard de Chardin, "does not follow a single strand or proceed in stages. The whole web advances at the same time. In this way the embryo is formed in the being which bears it." All the values transmitted by the society in which the illiterate adult has grown up may thus be given their due weight and included in a vitalized learning process, thereby facilitating learning itself. The principles stated above are put into practice in this way.

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Conclusions

The results obtained with children have shown the value of this approach.[34] We have every reason to believe that results with adults would be just as good. We hope that this brief report will stimulate interest in this advanced teaching method, and make a positive contribution to solving the vital problem of learning to write.

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